

Message Text

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ORIGIN OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NSF-01 CG-00 DOTE-00 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 L-03 PM-05 PA-01 EB-08 NAS-01
/049 R

DRAFTED BY OES:TSELLIN:EUR/NE:DDONCHI:HHB
APPROVED BY OES - PATSY T. MINK
-----090877 131848Z /50

P 131731Z MAR 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 063678

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: XQ, SV, NO

SUBJECT: NANSEN DRIFT STATION PROJECT: RESPONSE TO
NORWEGIAN PRESS QUERY

REFERENCE: OSLO 811; STATE 14156

1. GIVEN THE INCERTAIN FUTURE OF THE NANSEN DRIFT STATION PROJECT, DEPARTMENT BELIEVES THAT PUBLIC ATTENTION TO IT IN NORWAY WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AT THIS TIME. ANY DECISION TO SEEK TO USE SVALBARD AS A STAGING POINT FOR THE DRIFT PROJECT MUST AWAIT THE RESOLUTION OF THE BASIC QUESTION OF THE FUNDING, UTILITY AND VIABILITY OF THE PROJECT. IF IT IS DETERMINED THAT THE MERIT OF THE PROJECT WARRANTS THE EXPENSE, AND FUNDS CAN BE FOUND, THE DEPARTMENT WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ASSURE THAT A ROLE FOR SVALBARD WILL BE INCORPORATED INTO THE LOGISTICS PLAN. UNTIL THEN, HOWEVER, WE WOULD PREFER TO KEEP PUBLIC SPECULATION ABOUT THE PROJECT TO AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM.

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2. IN VIEW OF FOREGOING, EMBASSY SHOULD SUGGEST TO THE MORGENBLADET REPORTER THAT A STORY ABOUT THE NANSEN DRIFT STATION AT THIS TIME COULD SERVE TO HINDER RATHER THAN HELP THE POSSIBLE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT. IF HE PERSISTS, FOLLOWING POINTS MAY BE MADE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS LISTED IN OSLO REFTEL:
A) THE SCIENTIFIC PLAN FOR THE NANSEN DRIFT STATION

PROJECT WAS PREPARED BY THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND TRANSMITTED TO U.S. GOVERNMENT TECHNICAL AGENCIES, WHO HAVE REVIEWED IT IN TERMS OF PRIORITIES AND MEANS. IN SPITE OF STRONG STATE DEPARTMENT SUPPORT, NO AGENCY HAS DECIDED WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN OR FUND ALL OR A PART OF THE PROJECT.

B) IT IS NOT POSSIBLE NOW TO SAY WHEN THE PROJECT MIGHT BEGIN, EXCEPT THAT IT CANNOT BEGIN UNTIL A DECOMMISSIONED ICEBREAKER IS AVAILABLE FOR USE AS A PLATFORM AND FUNDING SECURED.

C) IT IS NOT POSSIBLE NOW TO SAY WHEN A DECISION WILL BE REACHED IN THE USG ON THE PROJECT.

D) AS THE FOREGOING INDICATES, NO SOURCE OF FUNDS HAS YET BEEN FOUND AMONG U.S. AGENCIES FOR THE PROJECT, THUS THE UNAVOIDABLE DELAY.

E) PROJECT PLANNERS ARE SEEKING FUNDS FROM AS MANY U.S. AGENCIES AS POSSIBLE BUT ARE UNABLE TO REPORT ANY SUCCESS THUS FAR.

3. WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT AMBASSADOR LERNER'S STRONG INTERVENTION DURING HIS CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON WILL PRODUCE SOME RESULTS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROGRESS REPORTS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION, PROGRAMS (PROJECTS)
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE063678
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: TSELLIN:EUR/NE:DDONCHI:HHB
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780111-0952
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780375/aaaacif.tel
Line Count: 96
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 874274c8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN OES
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 OSLO 811, 78 STATE 14156
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3350878
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NANSEN DRIFT STATION PROJECT: RESPONSE TO NORWEGIAN PRESS QUERY
TAGS: TGEN, XQ, SV, NO
To: OSLO
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/874274c8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014